
SPECIAL MOTION NO. 6 – RISK TO VOTING RIGHTS FROM CONSERVATIVE PHOTO IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENT

Standing in the names of:

- (i) Councillor Bora Kwon
- (ii) Councillor Patrick Walsh

The Council regrets the Conservative government's hurried plans to introduce photo identification for voters in national and local elections from May 2023 this year.

In a country where there is no existing form of compulsory identity documentation, imposing such a demand will be a barrier to participation in democracy for those who are not in possession of a passport or driving licence, both of which cost money to apply for and obtain. The move in particular imposes restrictions on, and disenfranchises, younger voters, who are less likely to have a qualifying photo ID.

Given the delays and long wait times to obtain passports due to shocking delays at the Home Office, the Council also has serious concerns about the Home Office's ability to put in place and run an alternative photo ID scheme. The shameful experiences of the Windrush generation show what can happen when we take for granted the ability of the Home Office to maintain accurate records on identity of this country's citizens.

The proposed requirement for photo ID will impose demands on council officers and public officials who run elections and may lead to valid voters across the country being turned away from the polling stations and denied their right to vote.

The extra burden on officers presiding over elections will also push up costs at a time when local government budgets are under unprecedented pressure.

The Council notes that elections in this country are very well run, with extremely low levels of voter fraud, and that public confidence in the process is high. The borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has an extremely efficient, well-regarded elections team.

Should the scheme come in, the Council commits to taking every step to ensure that all Hammersmith & Fulham residents entitled to vote are able to in future local and national elections.

Rather than putting up barriers to democracy, the government should be encouraging participation in the democratic process. The Council therefore calls on the government to scrap its proposed voter identification scheme.